

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AID-05 /073 W

-----071410Z 103683 /43

R 062147Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5410

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 0094

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, ELAB, HO

SUBJECT: FIRING OF LABMIN

1. LABMIN ENRIQUE FLORES VALERIANO WAS FIRED BY CHIEF OF STATE, GENERAL JUAN MELGAR CASTRO, AFTER AN APPARENT REFUSAL TO SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION. HE WAS THE ONLY CIVILIAN IN THE BABINET TO BE REPLACED. FLORES HAD BEEN HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL AS LABMIN, INCURRING NOT ONLY THE EXPECTED ANIMOSITY OF THE CONSERVATIVE PRIVATE SECTOR BUT ALSO OF THE TRADITIONAL DEMOCRATIC TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP OF HONDURAS. THE LATTER FELT THAT FLORES HAD ACTIVELY AIDED THE COMMUNISTS IN THEIR DRIVE TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE HONDURAN LABOR MOVEMENT, PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF THE TAKEOVER OF SITRATERCO (UNITED BRANDS FRUIT WORKERS UNION) BY THE COMMUNISTS IN 1975. FLORES WAS CONSIDERED A FRIEND BY THE HONDURAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCH). HE HAD ALSO INCURRED THE WRATH OF THE CONSERVATIVE PRIVATE SECTOR OVER THE HANDLING OF SOME RECENT STRIKES. REACTION TO THE FIRING WAS AS WOULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, THE DEMOCRATIC UNIONS BEING QUIETLY PLEASED AND THE COMMUNIST UNIONS LOUDLY LAMENTING THE FIRING. FLORES' SUCCESSOR AS LABMIN HAS NOT BEEN NAMED.

2. BEGIN COMMENT: FLORES HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT OF A MAVERICK AS LABMIN, NOT ALWAYS IN TUNE WITH GOH POLICY. THE MOST NOTABLE EXAMPLE WAS HIS PUBLIC ACCUSATION THAT THE GOH WAS VIOLATING THE LABOR CODE IN ITS EFFORT TO RESTRUCTURE THE NATIONAL

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AGRARIAN INSTITUTE. THE TRADITIONAL DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP OF THE HONDURAN LABOR MOVEMENT HAVE OPPOSED FLORES EVER SINCE HE (IN THEIR VIEW) AIDED THE COMMUNISTS TO TAKE OVER THE LEADERSHIP OF SITRATERCO IN 1975. SINCE THAT TIME FLORES HAS TAKEN EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO AID THE COMMUNISTS WITHIN THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND TO BLOCK THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES, SOMETIMES IN CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE LABOR CODE. THERE HAD BEEN SOME DISCUSSION WITHIN THE

DEMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERSHIP OF APPROACHING THE CHIEF OF STATE ABOUT THE PROBLEMS THAT THEY HAD BEEN HAVING WITH FLORES VALERIANO. IT IS NOT KNOWN AT THE MOMENT WHETHER ANY ACTION WAS TAKEN. AFTER HIS HANDLING OF THE POLYMER, S.A. STRIKE, FLORES BECAME A FAVORITE TARGET OF THE CONSERVATIVE PRIVATE SECTOR AS A SYMBOL OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE WITHIN THE GOH. HOWEVER, ANY LABMIN TRYING TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE HONDURAN WORKER WOULD EARN THE ANIMOSITY OF THIS SECTOR. IT IS LIKELY THEAT FLORES HAD SIMPLY BECOME TOO INDEPENDENT AND DISLIKED BY TOO MANY SECTORS--PARTICULARLY THE DEOMOCRATIC LABOR LEADERSHIP, A KEY GOH SUPPORTER--TO REMAIN IN THE CABINET.  
BECKER

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## Message Attributes

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